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ABSTRACT

Ramapo College, New Jersey, actively pursues a goal of "global" diversity on campus as part of an educational experience that prepares students for an international, multicultural world. The principles for developing diversity on campus traced by Arthur are in four stages: (1) "representation," which refers to the diversity of composition of all campus constituents and emphasizes percentages related to the larger population for all underrepresented groups (as opposed to absolute numbers); (2) "support," in which special counseling, ethnic studies and related efforts support the chances of success for new populations on campus; (3) "integration," which refers to the various ways that campuses can welcome and orient previously underrepresented groups; and (4) "Multiculturalism," in which a single community is made from a multicultural mosaic. Using these principles, Ramapo College has adopted an aggressive approach to preparing students for increased diversity. The affirmative action officer position was given higher status and information on that issue was made a more frequent and routine part of reporting. Institutional commitment is a first priority followed by institutional partners from the community. This program has helped Ramapo College increase the diversity of its faculty and student enrollment. (JB)

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Developing Diversity as a Campus Strength

by

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Diversity as an educational value

Ramapo College is known as the "college of choice for a global education." We chose that phrase because it conveys a sense of purpose, a sense of ambition, a sense of mission. The word "global" means "all over." To most people, international means "over there," and that wasn't adequate to our purpose. We want our students and faculty to know not only the international dimensions of their fields of study, but also the multicultural dimensions of this country as well. We want them to learn about the history, literature and heroes of various peoples, not just of one nation or group.

Our goal is to provide a college education to prepare graduates for an increasingly interdependent and multicultural world. The reasons for increased interdependence are well known; communications and transportation make information, ideas, and even disease readily available around the world. We are interdependent economically, environmentally, and militarily, if not always philosophically.

We emphasize a multicultural world because communications and transportation make it possible for multiple cultures to exist side by side. We have communities nearby with people from as many as a dozen different Spanish-speaking countries alone; in some city schools, nearly 100 different languages are spoken.

We also know that our graduates likely will supervise or be supervised by someone of another racial, ethnic, nationality or gender group. We want our graduates to be prepared. Successful employment will require skills in language and culture as well as in technical areas. We know this from discussions with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey whose locations provide employment for hundreds of thousands of people. We know this from meetings with leaders in fields as diverse as graphics and printing, textiles, electronics, food distribution and medical supplies.

The mission of colleges and universities is to enhance the ability of our students to learn and pursue truth on their own; we do this through the curriculum and extracurriculum, in class and out, the library, laboratories, and fieldwork -- all places where diversity of cultures is evident.

Principles for developing diversity on campus

Arthur Levine traces four stages in the development of diversity on campus.[1] Drawing from a study of fourteen institutions, he describes the stages as (1) representation, (2) support, (3) integration, and (4) multiculturalism. "Representation" refers to those activities which are related to diversity of composition, including age, gender, race, ethnicity and nationality, of the student body and then of all campus constituents, including trustees. During the period of "representation," the emphasis changes from a focus on absolute numbers to percentages related to the larger population, and from a focus on African-Americans to all underrepresented groups.

The second stage concerns "support," by which Levine means supplemental courses, special counseling, ethnic studies, and related efforts intended to support the chances of success for new populations on campus.

The third stage emphasizes "integration," or the various ways in which campuses can welcome and orient previously underrepresented groups in positive ways. Finally, the fourth stage is the one which is receiving so much attention these days -- the making of a single community from a "multicultural" mosaic.

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[1]"The Meaning of Diversity," Change, September/October 1991, p.4.

I recount Levine's categories because I think you will recognize them -- even as we recognize they may develop at different rates on different campuses. Nevertheless, these categories are a useful backdrop for a set of principles which we use at Ramapo. Some of these principles we formulated in 1985-86, at the start of our strategy to emphasize global education; others we recognized and adopted as we went along.

We decided to emphasize international and multicultural concerns equally, for the reasons cited above. At the same time, we decided to make our emphasis pervasive, throughout the campus, not precious, as part of a small enclave. This means that diversity is a part of the accounting major as well as of College English I; Physics as well as area studies.

Diversity issues are part of the extracurriculum as well as the curriculum, faculty research and public service as well as instruction, campus governance as well as areas of administration, the maintenance staff as well as general education.

Diversity issues are also related to "who" teaches as well as "what" is to be taught; what students need to know as well as what students want to study.

As I hope this recitation makes clear, we adopted an aggressive approach to preparing students for a new world. We emphasize student learning; our approach is interdisciplinary. We consciously try not to allow the boundaries of disciplines to proscribe our mission, which is to enhance the ability of students to learn and pursue truth on their own.

The varied domains of diversity

As is evident, issues of diversity can and should occur in the curriculum, student clubs and activities, staffing decisions, trustee appointments, student enrollment targets, partnerships with schools and corporations, even outreach programs to the community. In all of these activities and more, we can and must help our students prepare for citizenship and careers in an increasingly interdependent and multicultural world.

But how can we do it? How can we ensure that the diversity which we celebrate doesn't cause us to dissipate our energies and lose focus. What are the points of leverage for attaining our goals? How do we fulfill the new mission of higher education to be "related" to society, not just an "ivory tower" apart. There is not much diversity in an isolated, residential college for young men based on a 19th century mold. But this is not the cast of today's college.

Points of leverage for developing diversity

On every campus there are points of leverage for change, opportunities for influencing goals and actions. And the starting point is the mission statement. This statement, which is reviewed formally every five years as part of the accreditation cycle, and which should be reviewed more often as part of strategic planning, contains expressions of institutional purpose and indicates the results expected. It is the statement against which major institutional decisions should be measured. If it places a high value on preparing graduates for an increasingly interdependent and multicultural society, and on the role of the campus as a place to introduce students to the diversity of the world -- since most will not take the "Grand Tour" upon graduation -- then other actions can follow.

After all, the strategic plan, accrediting self-studies, and the annual goals of senior officers and deans should be driven by the mission statement. Individual performance appraisals and salary decisions should be related. Academic program reviews and administrative unit reviews follow. The annual budget development process and staffing decisions should also be related to the mission and goals.

These are all points of leverage for action. Other points of leverage are available, of course. Every campus has rewards to give, whether of time or money or recognition. Time on the trustee's agenda conveys importance; merit awards support institutional values; committee assignments and a place on the president's cabinet suggest priority.

Perhaps an illustration will help. One of our principles concerns who will teach as well as what will be taught. When I arrived at Ramapo six and one-half years ago, Affirmative Action goals were modest and success was so-so. In my first year, I thought visible presidential commitment was enough. It wasn't. So we used some points of leverage.

First, I appointed a new affirmative action officer, strengthened the title to senior advisor to the president on affirmative action and employment planning, and added that officer to my cabinet. The affirmative action report each week is the second item on our agenda, following the minutes of the previous meeting.

Second, we developed a format for quarterly reports on affirmative action goals and progress to be submitted to the president and discussed with the board of trustees in public session.

Third, we explicitly included affirmative action as one of the criteria on which management performance would be evaluated and salary recommendations would be based.

Fourth, we required each search committee to "search" as well as screen. Only those committees whose pools included minorities and females would be eligible for travel funds, unless the vice president or president granted an exemption after evaluating the search process.

Fifth, members of the reorganized affirmative action committee were trained and assigned to each new search committee as monitors.

Sixth, many searches that did not produce a minority or female candidate in the final pool were cancelled and required to start over again.

Seventh, we dedicated an open faculty line to a visiting minority scholar position and invited various academic programs to apply for the position. This has created a pool of visiting scholar "alumni" who help us recruit permanent faculty. In the process, campus academic units developed plans for recruiting minority faculty members.

These are points of leverage for action -- in this case, for strengthening campus diversity in fulfillment of institutional mission.

Lessons from a campus

There are other lessons to be learned from campus experience, and I am sure this audience has many to offer.

One of the first things we did was to seek grants from governmental agencies and private foundations. These grants, plus our own budget for faculty and curriculum development, allowed

us to assist faculty in preparing new courses and course materials, and in studying how students learn.

These funds also allowed us to engage consultants for program development, teaching methods, and intergroup relations. Jane Eliot and her "Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes" program has been especially popular and effective.

An important part of faculty development is the cross-fertilization which occurs when faculty from different institutions, and even different fields, meet to discuss commonly held questions. We have hosted several conferences dealing with intercultural issues.

Money is not the most important ingredient for progress. Commitment is the sine qua non. Next is "partners." Our visiting minority scholars become partners. 100 Black Men of New Jersey is a partner. The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is a partner. Partners help create opportunities for teaching and learning which the campus alone cannot initiate. Partners become mentors on campus as well as guides off-campus.

Conclusion

While our results have been heartening, there is still more to do. During the past six years, 50% of new faculty appointments have been to female scholars, 40% to minority scholars. Comparable gains have been made in administrative appointments at all levels.

During the same period, Ramapo's enrollment grew by about 25% overall, minority enrollment increased 65%, international student enrollment increased almost 200%, and the enrollment of

disabled students increased 90%. About 40% of our students are part-time, and most of those are adults.

Progress, yes. But each successful step has helped raise our aspirations for student and faculty involvement and retention. The greater the diversity we attain, the more sophisticated about diversity we become.

We formed a vision, formulated a set of principles, identified and used various points of leverage, and continue to learn as we grow. We started by talking about the increasingly interdependent and multicultural world "out there," and have brought it to our campus.